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IRAN AND THE GULF WAR

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[REDACTED] AS indicated in many of the attached papers, we will have reasonably early warning about Iranian military movements which suggest the likelihood of hostilities in one or another area. We cannot determine with certainty Iran's targets, however, and their intentions are unclear.

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- Nonetheless, we must assume that the Iranians will be guided to a major extent by their own ideology which views the struggle against the US in terms of a major US Muslim war.

2. The following features of Iran's policy are dominant:

- Iran will conduct a long-term struggle against the West and particularly the US regardless of the arena. Lebanon is critical because of its large Shia presence, the American military role there, and US support for Christian elements. The countries of the Gulf will be equally significant targets both because of their Shia population and political alignment in support of Iraq and the West.
- While we cannot predict with certainty that Iran will meet Iraqi attacks in the Gulf with a firm plan to close the Gulf entirely, Iran will certainly respond broadly and will carry the war in some fashion against the Gulf states.
- Terrorism will probably be Iran's primary instrument since it is cheap, effective, avoids direct military confrontation with the US and is symbolic of the broader political struggle. (I am concerned that we may be assuming Iran will be unwilling to face West/US military power in the Gulf. While Iran will not be foolish, it does believe that clashes between resurgent Islam and the US will come, Iran may not shrink from such clashes, believing that the Muslim population of the region will be affected by Iran's dedication to the cause even when faced with superior military force.

3. Syria's interests at the present time largely coincide with those of Iran. The Gulf states are unhappy with Syrian policy towards the Palestinians (directly affecting Palestinians resident in the Gulf) and they are extremely disturbed at Syria's choking of the Iraqi economy. Syria shares with Iran an interest in seeing the Gulf states intimidated and fearful of direct criticism of Syrian policies.

4. I perceive a greater degree of backbone in the Gulf at this time than we might have expected in terms of willingness to stand up to terrorism and look to the West for support. The long-term struggle is much more dangerous, however, in that Iran is dedicated to demonstrating to all Muslims that the US is fundamentally working in tandem with Israel against Palestinians and broader Arab interests. Iran will point out that America's war in Lebanon is

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increasingly moving towards support of a Christian minority that itself is aligned with Israel. If Iran can persuade the population of the Gulf and the moderate Arab states that the US is in fact the chief enemy, then the Gulf states may seek to disassociate themselves as fully as possible from a security relationship with the US that is perceived risky to themselves. We will be engaged in a struggle to prove US evenhandedness against an ideological Iran determined to choose these issues in the starkest, religious and political terms.



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